



Surprise City Court  
Language Access Plan (LAP)  
Revised August 2014

## **I. Legal Basis and Purpose**

This document serves as the plan for the Surprise City Court to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000 d et seq.; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 et seq.; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101-42.112). The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Surprise City Court.

This language access plan (LAP) was developed to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency. Although court interpreters are provided for persons with a hearing loss, access services for them are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore will not be addressed in this plan.

## **II. Needs Assessment**

### **A. Statewide**

The State of Arizona provides court services to a wide range of people, including those who speak limited or no English. From a statewide perspective, the following languages were listed with the greatest number of speakers who spoke English less than “Very Well” in Arizona (according to the American Community Survey estimate report from the U.S. Census Bureau dated April 2012):

1. Spanish
2. Navajo
3. Chinese
4. Vietnamese

### **B. Surprise City Court**

The Surprise City Court will make every effort to provide services to all LEP persons. However, the following list shows the foreign languages that are most frequently used in this court’s geographic area:

1. Spanish
2. Assyrian
3. Polish
4. Romanian

This information is based on data collected from:

1. Surprise City Court bilingual staff,
2. United States Census Bureau April 2012 American Community Survey,
3. CourTools Measure 1-Access and Fairness 2014 Surprise Municipal Court Cumulative Statistical Analysis report
4. Internal statistics and
5. Data collected from interpreter billing invoices

### **III. Language Assistance Resources**

#### **A. Interpreters Used in the Courtroom**

##### **1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom**

In the Surprise City Court, interpreters will be provided at no cost to LEP court customers (including witnesses, victims and parents or guardians) who need such assistance in all courtroom proceedings.

It is the responsibility of the private attorney or Public Defender to provide qualified interpretation and translation services for witness interviews, pre-trial transcriptions and translations and attorney/client communications during out-of-court proceedings.

##### **2. Determining the Need for an Interpreter in the Courtroom**

The Surprise City Court may determine whether an LEP court customer needs an interpreter for a court hearing in various ways.

The need for a court interpreter may be identified prior to a court proceeding by the LEP person or on the LEP person's behalf by court staff at the front counter and/or by telephone. The citing officer may indicate interpreter and language needs on the face of an ATTC or eCitation. Interpreter information then transfers to the automated case management system (AZTEC) via electronic or manual data processing. The Interpreter Coordinator retrieves court calendars from AZTEC and schedules internal or external court certified interpreters as needed.

Signage throughout the court building indicating interpreter services are available may also help to identify LEP individuals. The Surprise City Court will display this sign at the following locations: entry point at security station, lobby information desk and front counter windows.

The need for an interpreter also may be made known in the courtroom at the time of the proceeding. In a case where the court is mandated to provide an interpreter, but one is not available at the time of the proceeding, even after the court has made all reasonable efforts to locate one, as previously outlined in this plan, the case will be postponed and continued on a date when an interpreter can be provided.

### **3. Court Interpreter Resources**

#### **Court Interpreter Registry and Listserv**

The Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) maintains a statewide roster of individuals who indicate they have interpreting experience and have expressed interest in working in the courts. This roster is available to court staff on the Internet at <http://www.interpreters.courts.az.gov>.

Additionally, the AOC created a statewide listserv to allow courts to communicate via email on court interpreter-related matters. The listserv is an excellent resource to locate referrals for specific language needs.

#### **Video Remote Interpreting**

The AOC has installed video conferencing equipment at the State Courts building that will allow courts with compatible technology to remotely conference an interpreter from the Phoenix metro area out to their court to improve resource allocation and reduce time and costs associated with interpreter travel.

### **B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom**

The Surprise City Court is also responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to services provided by the court outside the courtroom, including routine contact with court personnel and in situations where LEP litigants are ordered to attend mediation, or a treatment or educational program provided by a private vendor under contract with the court.

The court uses the following resources to facilitate communication with LEP individuals and court staff or providers of court-ordered services:

1. Sixty (60) percent of Surprise City Court staff speaks Spanish either proficiently or conversationally;
2. Independent interpreter contractors;
3. "I Speak" cards, to identify the individual's primary language;
4. Telephonic interpreter services from contract agencies such as *Language Line* when on-site interpreters are not available;

To provide linguistically accessible services for LEP individuals, the Surprise City Court provides the following:

1. Bilingual staff that provide Spanish interpretation. When LEP customers seek our assistance outside the courtroom, we first try to meet their needs by using the language skills of our employees.
2. For face-to-face encounters, as well as telephone conversations, the Surprise City Court uses *Language Line* when on-site interpreters are not available.
3. When court staff does not know what language a customer is speaking, they use "I Speak" cards, which are available in many languages.
4. Website link from court's website to the Supreme Court's Spanish translated webpage for court forms and instructions: <http://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter/SelfServiceForms.aspx>

5. Staff who have some knowledge of another language but need help with court terminology may consult the *Spanish Language Style Guide and Glossaries for U.S. Government Web Sites*, <http://www.howto.gov/web-content/multilingual/spanish-guide>
6. *Notice of Interpreter Services* signs in Spanish, English, Vietnamese and Arabic, are displayed throughout the courthouse.

### **C. Translated Forms and Documents**

The Arizona courts understand the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the court's services. The Surprise City Court currently uses forms translated into Spanish.

The court has translated various documents into Spanish:

1. Motion, Order and Notice of Hearing Date;
2. Petition for Order of Protection, Injunction Prohibiting Harassment, Workplace Injunction;
3. Plaintiff's and Defendant's Guide Sheet for Protective Orders;
4. Records Request;
5. Sentencing Order;
6. Civil Traffic Judgment and Sentencing Order;
7. Payment Order.

These documents can be found at the front counter, in the courtroom and online at the court's website: [www.surpriseaz.gov/court](http://www.surpriseaz.gov/court).

Other translated forms can be found on the Arizona Supreme Court's Spanish-translated webpage at <http://www.azcourts.az.gov/elcentrodeautoservicio/FormulariosdeAutoservicio.aspx>.

Interpreters at court hearings are expected to provide sight translations of court documents and correspondence associated with the case.

## **IV. Court Staff and Volunteer Recruitment**

### **Recruitment of Bilingual Staff for Language Access**

The Surprise City Court is an equal opportunity employer and recruits and hires bilingual staff to serve its LEP constituents. Primary examples include but are not limited to:

1. Regular full-time employees of the court serve as interpreters;
2. Bilingual staff serve at the front counter and telephones;
3. Bilingual employees are readily available to assist with contacts from LEP individuals, as needed.

## **V. Judicial and Staff Training**

The Surprise City Court is committed to providing language access training opportunities for all judicial officers and staff members. Training and learning opportunities currently offered by other agencies will be continued. Those opportunities include:

- Interpreter training through a court interpreter training institute;
- Diversity, inclusion and cultural competency training;
- LAP training;
- New employee orientation and customer service training; and,
- Judicial officer orientation/training on use of court interpreters and language competency.
- AOC's Language Access in the Courtroom Training DVD (4/2014)

## **VI. Public Outreach and Education**

To communicate with the court's LEP constituents on various legal issues of importance to the community and to make them aware of services available to all language speakers, the Surprise City Court provides community outreach and education and seeks input from its LEP constituency to further improve services. Outreach and education efforts include:

- Conducting an annual National Center for State Courts' CourTools Access and Fairness Survey, also available in Spanish.

## **VII. Formal Complaint Process**

If an LEP court customer believes meaningful access to the courts was not provided to them, they may choose to file a complaint with the trial court's Language Access Plan Coordinator.

## **VIII. Public Notification and Evaluation of LAP**

### **A. LAP Approval and Notification**

The Surprise City Court's LAP is approved by the presiding judge and court administrator. Upon approval, a copy is forwarded to the AOC Court Services Division. Any revisions to the plan will be submitted to the presiding judge and court administrator for approval, and then forwarded to the AOC. Copies of Surprise City Court's LAP will be available to the public on the court's website at [www.surpriseaz.gov/court](http://www.surpriseaz.gov/court), or by contacting the court at (623) 222-4800.

### **B. Evaluation of the LAP**

The Surprise City Court will routinely assess whether changes to the LAP are needed. The plan may be changed or updated at any time but reviewed not less frequently than once a year.

Each year, the Court Management Team will review the effectiveness of the court's LAP and update it as necessary. The evaluation will include identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. From time to time, the court may consider using a survey sampling of data collection for a limited time period which involves assessing language requests to assist in the evaluation of the LAP.

Elements of the evaluation will include:

1. Number of LEP persons requesting Spanish court interpreters;
2. Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided;
3. Solicitation and review of feedback from LEP communities within the city;
4. Assessment of whether court staff adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out;
5. Review of feedback from court employee training sessions; and
6. Customer satisfaction feedback (see VI. Public Outreach).

**C. Trial Court Language Access Plan Coordinator:**

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**D. AOC Language Access Contact:**

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**E. LAP Effective date: January 3, 2012**

**F. LAP Revision date: August 5, 2014**

**G. Approved by:**

Presiding Judge: Louis Frank Dominguez Date: 8/5/14